
This is a collection of articles selected from and based on revised versions of papers presented at meetings of the Wisdom and Apocalypticism Group of the Society of Biblical Literature between 1994 and 2002. The book consists of three parts, one on “issues and outlook” which introduces some points for discussion (17-54), one on “wisdom and apocalypticism in early Judaism” (5 articles; 57-145), and one on “wisdom and apocalypticism in early Christianity” (4 articles; 149-213). For the purpose of this journal, the review focuses on the first two parts of the book which relate to early Judaism.

The article by George W. E. Nickelsburg (17-37), based on a 1994 paper, opens the series by introducing “some points for discussion.” Nickelsburg gives an interesting survey of possible points of connection between categories of wisdom and apocalypticism previously kept separate in scholarly debate and rightly cautions against artificial compartmentalization. Nickelsburg’s idea that Enoch’s relationship with the Mosaic Torah, and also with the Prophets, is “ambiguous” (24-25) seems less clear. For if this were the case, why do both the Torah and 1 Enoch (4QEnoch*e, 4QEnastr+dr ar, 1QEnGiantsa-b, 2QEnGiants, 4QEnGiants+e ar) have an important place in the Qumran library whose sectarian texts do advocate a proper interpretation of the Torah? The interaction of the symposium setting is drawn out in this part by the sequence of response by Sarah J. Tanzer (39-49) and counter-response by Nickelsburg (51-54). This subsequent discussion turns to the relative neglect of distinctive features and settings of wisdom literature as compared to scholarly attention for apocalyptic texts and apocalypticism. “Texts that complicate the categories” include not only the Wisdom of Solomon and 1QS (Nickelsburg, 28-29), 4QInstruction and the Hodayot (Tanzer, 46), but also other Qumran texts like 1-4QMysteries and 4QTime of Righteousness (4Q215a) as is made clear by discussion in a congress volume on the theme of wisdom and apocalypticism (BETL, 168) edited by Florentino García Martínez in 2003. The discussion by Nickelsburg and Tanzer makes it clear that the study of early Jewish texts as “historical artifacts” stands in need of methodological reconsideration vis-à-vis established scholarly perspectives on dividing lines between sapiential and apocalyptic texts and their supposed social settings.

The article by Matthew J. Goff, “Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and the Pedagogical Ethos of 4QInstruction” (57-67), is a revised version of a 2002 seminar paper. Goff makes the point that learning and instruction play a part in both sapiential and apocalyptic traditions and that 4QInstruction draws on “different kinds of knowledge” from both traditions (59-60). Yet he keeps relating the pedagogical ethos of 4QInstruction mainly to traditional wisdom, while further discerning
some elements of apocalyptic tradition in the text (65-66). Nevertheless, the language of instruction is not far apart from apocalyptic texts either, as may be illustrated by instruction about an apocalyptic view of history up to the present “age of wickedness” in the admonition part of the Damascus Document.

The article by Rodney A. Werline, a slightly updated version of a 2000 seminar paper (with one bibliographical reference posterior to 2000 on 70 n. 5), examines the “ideology of rule” in the Psalms of Solomon (69-87). Werline may with some justification identify a Deuteronomic ideology as guiding thought behind the critique of rule in the Psalms of Solomon (72-74), but there is a problem with Werline’s supposition that the text seems to be in “complete opposition to what is generally regarded as the apocalyptic worldview” (84). This supposition is based on the notion that “apocalypticism reflects a kind of determinism” and dualism between demonic forces, posing “a threat that humans cannot overpower,” and God. This notion of an “apocalyptic worldview” overlooks or minimizes the part which human free will, spirit and deeds play in, for instance, the Qumran Community Rule which includes apocalyptic sections with deterministic and dualistic language.

The article by Benjamin G. Wright III (89-112), based on a 1996 seminar paper, explores the question of Sirach’s social location. Wright identifies “competing notions of scribal wisdom and priestly legitimacy” behind Sirach, 1 Enoch and Aramaic Levi (111), but it seems less sure whether the social location of Sirach can be determined exclusively by putting the text in this comparative matrix. Some parallels which Wright puts forward in the process of literary comparison are too general to be make a point. For instance, when he compares the “polemic about proper marriage practices and the wickedness of some priests” in to 1 Enoch (105), one could as well add 4QMMT and the Psalms of Solomon.

The article by Patrick A. Tiller, a revised version of a 1999 seminar paper, examines the Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 85-90) as an Enoch interpretation of postexilic imperialism (113-21). Tiller surveys antecedent traditions behind the apocalypse’s shepherd/sheep imagery in Daniel 7-8, Ezekiel 34, and Zechariah 11, and behind the figure of seventy shepherds in Jeremiah 25 and Daniel 9:24-27, and he further argues that the Animal Apocalypse builds on the Enochic tradition of the watchers. For its interesting analysis of allegory, it is not immediately clear how the article contributes to the theme of “conflicted boundaries between wisdom and apocalypticism.”

The last article in part two on “wisdom and apocalypticism in early Judaism” is that by Richard A. Horsley, which analyses the “historical context and political-religious relations of the scribes who produced 1 Enoch, Sirach, and Daniel” (123-145). This article is based on a 2001 seminar paper. Horsley gives a historical picture of rivalry between different factions in scribal circles and priestly aristocracy at the time when Sirach and the Enoch and Daniel literature were composed. Concluding this survey, Horsley differentiates between 1 Enoch and Daniel as